



Fields of Battle Discussion Guide



Overview:

This book is an account of the military history of North America from the personal perspective of an English historian. John Keegan weaves two narratives together: his own personal travels through America and a straightforward history of the major battles that determined the fate of the continent. This ultimately creates a unique lens through which the reader can understand the formation of present day Canada and the United States.

Discussion Questions:

1. Keegan, a British historian, often refers to the vast amount of space as the defining characteristic of the United States. What do you think an American historian would say is the defining characteristic of the U.S.?
2. In what way did the British victory in the Seven Years War directly cause the American Revolution?
3. Why was West Point, New York such an important strategic location in the war?
4. Why did the British want to cut the revolution into two halves: north of New York and south of New York?
5. Describe "American style" warfare as mentioned by Keegan in chapter four. How does this style compare with the modern day insurgency tactics?
6. After the Battle of Gaines' Mill, McClellan sent a telegram to Washington stating that "I have lost this battle because my force was too small...I was not responsible for this...The Government has not sustained this army." Discuss McClellan's telegram in contrast to Marine Corps leadership standards.
7. Discuss the impact of the rifle on the Great Plains Indians and the augmentation of conflict on the Western frontier. What was the "Calvary Revolution?"
8. Discuss Custer's analysis of enemy center of gravity and critical vulnerability at the Battle of Little Big Horn. How could a proper METT-T analysis have prevented the massacre?
9. In what way is the airplane "quintessentially American?"
10. Describe Keegan's understanding of how Americans view war. In what way has America used war to promote her interests throughout her history?

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